

Lent 1968 March 5, 1969

Evening Service Page 10
Opening

Hymn 479

Scripture Luke 9; 18-27

Prayer

Hymn 160

Sermon

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

Hymn 158

Benediction

PARISH AGREEMENT ON DOLL.
BOARD

IN FUTURE CONG. MEETING

NEXT LENTEN SERVICE 26TH.

16TH REV HIAK

23RD PAUL ALTY

Dear Daddy, ---dear

T
H--

The church service you had was good.
-I- I liked the song TELL THE STORY.
~~XXXXXX~~ Today is a nice day
Isn't it?

Love ,Nancy

Lenten Meditation March 5, 1969

Text: Luke 9; 13-27

As most of you must have surmised by now, I have a certain love for music. I especially am fond of hymns and their background, who wrote them, why they came to be written, and the thinking of the person who wrote them. These to me are very intriguing thoughts. Perhaps some of you may share this love also. All in all I think we can safely say that music in the Church has a distinct part in the service and that it plays a unique role in the life of the worshipper. For my theme for this Lenten season I have chosen to think along the lines of the central point of the Season, and this is the cross. In particular I have thought of using some of the better known lenten hymns for my background material. One such hymn is, ~~the hymn~~ "When I survey The Wondrous Cross."

"When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride."

Isaac Watts wrote this beloved hymn. He was considered, and often referred to as the father of English hymnody. He once said of himself, "It was not my design to exalt myself to the rank and glory of poets; but I was ambitious to be a servant to the churches, and a helper to the joy of the meanest Christian." He was the most productive of the hymn writers of his day. During his lifetime he practically ruled the sanctuary of music in the English church. His hymns and his only were sung; and for many years nothing else but Watts hymns were sung throughout the English speaking world. When we look at this hymn and see its solemnity, its religious fervor and passion we cannot help but agree with a Matthew Arnold who considered it the greatest hymn in the English language.

When we look at the cross in our minds eye, or come out, thoughts to be directed to it we can perhaps feel the humility this writer must have felt when he penned the words, "My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride." Can we honestly think of the cross and have anything but humility. All the things of this world, and all of the valued possessions we may have, shrink to nothingness when we consider the enormity of this sacrifice.

"Forbid it Lord that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood."

We cannot boast of anything in comparison to the death of Christ. All the honors and the riches of this world may be heaped upon us or poured at our feet, and yet they are nothing as compared to the blood of the Lamb. A man must spend his life in the service of mankind. He cannot ~~have~~ hoard it or save it. He must use it. He cannot stand back and ask, "What's in it for me?" But he must ask, "How much can I give?" He cannot ask, "What is the safe thing to do?" But he must ask, "What is the right thing to do?" This is what Christianity demands of those who will serve. This is what Christianity is to those who would follow in the footsteps of the Master.

"See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Jesus knew what lay ahead when He spoke to His disciples and told them of His coming suffering and death, which we heard read as our Scripture.

He knew that the agony and misery would be horrible. The torture would be cruel, and the death slow. He must have known what crucifixion was, and what it meant. When He was about eleven years old a man named Judas the Galilean had led a rebellion against Rome. What he had done was to raid the royal armoury at Sepphoris, which was only four miles from Nazareth. The Romans burned Sepphoris to the ground, sold its inhabitants into slavery and crucified two thousand of the rebels. They were executed on crosses which were set in lines along the roadside, so that they would serve as ~~reminders~~ a warning to others who might be tempted to rebel.

So Jesus tells His followers that if anyone wants to be a follower of Him, they must take up their cross every day and follow Him. This means to be willing to stick our necks out for Him. It means being willing to forgo the love of the world and to love Him. It means being involved in life where it is lived and not to close ourselves off from the rest of the world. It also means to be willing to sacrifice of our time, of our money to serve the kingdom, and it means to be willing to share whatever talents we are blessed with, with others. Some people are of the erroneous idea that using our talents only applies to those

who have a talent such as singing or being able to speak and to preach. But this is not so. All of us have talents of some sort. To some it may be the ability to give comfort to those who are ill or need consolation. To some it is the ability to work with their hands and to show others how to do this. To still others it is the ability to teach children or adults for that matter. But each of us has these abilities and if we do not use them we are not accepting our Christian duty. We are not taking up our cross daily and following Christ. This is what He meant when He told his disciples this.

There are two seasons of the Church year that have a very visible effect on most people. These are Christmas and Lent. Lent in particular effects more people I think because it makes us aware of our sinful selves and what the sacrifice of Jesus means to us as His followers. I have always been deeply moved by Lent and I have come to be much more deeply moved at this season since I have been able to serve in my present capacity. To me it is a time of deep soul searching. It is a time that makes me aware of what my religion is all about. When I contemplate what Jesus did for me I can't help but echo the words of another hymn that Isaac Watts wrote, when he said, "Alas and did my ^{Saviour} bleed and did my sovereign die, Did He devote that sacred head for a worm such as I? We have reformed the wording to read, "For sinners such as I." Somehow the word worm must have made some people squirm a little so it was taken out. But could we become any lower than a worm? Perhaps we ~~strive~~ to think too highly of ourselves and maybe this ^{is} ~~my~~ ~~one~~ ~~reason~~ ~~why~~ religion is in the turmoil it is today. We need to acknowledge our sinfulness and our need of salvation. This is what the cross is all about.

The closing verse of When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, I believe is one of the most meaningful pieces of verse ever written about the cross. If you and I and every professing Christian were to make this the central theme in our lives, perhaps we would be better Christians. Perhaps we would feel the need just a little more to be willing to take up our cross daily.

- "were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small;

Love so amazing so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Let us pray.